

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated in the complete listing of pending claims listed below.

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

receiving ~~an audio request~~ ~~one or more search criteria in an audio form~~, via an audio-transmission medium, from a ~~user-seeking service providers from a wide array of fields of service; when the audio request includes, the one or more search criteria including~~ a field of service desired by the ~~user~~; user, providing the ~~user with an audio list of one or more service providers stored in~~ searching a service provider database ~~according to the one or more search criteria to generate a list of one or more service providers which match the field of service desired by the user;~~ presenting the list of one or more service providers in an audio form to the user; determining a selection ~~from~~ ~~of~~ the user for a selected service provider stored within the service provider database ~~from the list of one or more service providers~~; and connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the one or more search criteria in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the method providing the user with an audio list of service providers further comprises:~~ converting the one or more search criteria from the audio form into a database query to search the service provider database;

wherein when the audio request includes a voice entry of a search criterion request for a field of service desired by the user, converting the voice entry request into a database query language format utilizing interactive voice recognition software; and

wherein when the audio request from the user includes a keypad entry of a search criterion response from the user, converting a signal generated by the user's keypad entry utilizing a Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) decoder into a database query language format in order to enable selection of service providers matching the field of service desired by the user from the service provider database; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query of the field of service desired by the user in order to generate a list of one or more service providers matching the user's desired field of service.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database; and  
when the service provider is approved for inclusion in the service provider database,  
generating a record in the service provider database, the record including provider information contained in the request, wherein the provider information includes one or more of a service price, real-time service provider availability, specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more languages spoken by the service provider and a quality rating for the service provider.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
billing the user for the live conversation with the selected service provider; and  
compensating the selected service provider for the live conversation with the user.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:  
measuring a duration of the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider; and  
calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation and a time-based price charged by the selected service provider.
6. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:  
calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee charged by the service provider.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more search criteria in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the audio request ~~from the user is~~ includes one of a voice request and a keypad entry response and includes one or more of a category of service providers, a service provider price, service provider availability, service provider specific expertise, service provider language and a service provider minimum quality rating.
8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein prior to the receiving the audio request, the method further comprises further comprising:~~  
~~receiving a request from a user for connection to a voice portal service provider system via the audio transmission medium;~~

~~establishing a connection between the user and the voice portal service provider system in order to provide the user with a live connection with a chosen service provider;~~

providing the user with an audio list of ~~the~~a wide array of fields of service available from the audio portal service provider system; and

providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each field of service within the audio list of fields of service, ~~such that wherein the user can enter an keypad entry of a field of service code on a keypad of the user is received via the~~ audio transmission medium to select a desired field of service for the one or more search criteria;

wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an option list.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein following the connecting the user with the selected service provider, the method further comprises:  
once the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider is complete, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for services rendered by the service provider; and  
recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining a selection from the user further comprises:  
when the user audio request includes a voice request, converting the voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user;

when the user audio request includes a keypad entry response, converting a signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query language format in order to determine the service provider selected by the user; and querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the service provider desired by the user to enable connection between the user and the desired service provider.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium including program ~~instruction-instructions~~ that directs a computer to function in a specified manner when executed by a processor, the ~~program instructions manner~~ comprising:  
receiving ~~an audio request one or more search criteria in an audio form~~, via an audio-transmission medium, from a user ~~seeking service providers from a wide array of fields of service; when the audio request includes, the one or more search criteria including~~ a field of service desired by the ~~user; user, providing the user with an audio list of one or more service providers stored in~~ searching a service provider database ~~according to the one or more search criteria to generate a list of one or more service providers which match the field of service desired by the user;~~  
~~presenting the list of one or more service providers in an audio form to the user;~~  
determining a selection ~~from of~~ the user for a selected service provider ~~stored within the service provider database from the list of one or more service providers;~~  
and  
connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.

12. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of ~~claim 10~~ claim 11, wherein the one or more search criteria in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the manner providing the user with an audio list of service providers further comprises:

converting the one or more search criteria from the audio form into a database query to search the service provider database;

wherein when the audio request includes a voice ~~entry of a search criterion~~ request for a field of service desired by the user, converting the voice ~~entry~~ request into a database query language format utilizing interactive voice recognition software; and

wherein when the audio request from the user includes a keypad entry of a search criterion response from the user, converting a signal generated by the user's keypad entry utilizing a Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) decoder into a database query language format in order to enable selection of service providers matching the field of service desired by the user from the service provider database; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query of the field of service desired by the user in order to generate a list of one or more service providers matching the user's desired field of service.

13. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, further comprising wherein the manner further comprises:

receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database; and

when the service provider is approved for inclusion in the service provider database, generating a record in the service provider database, the record including provider information contained in the request, wherein the provider information includes ~~one or more of a service price, real time service provider availability, specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more languages spoken by the service provider and a quality rating for the service provider.~~

14. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, ~~further comprising wherein the manner further comprises:~~ billing the user for the live conversation with the selected provider; and compensating the selected service provider for the live conversation with the user.

15. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~the instruction for said~~ billing the user further comprises: measuring the duration of the live conversation between the user and the provider; and calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation and a time-based price charge by the provider.

16. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein ~~the instruction for said~~ billing the user further comprises: calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee price charge by the provider.

17. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein  
the one or more search criteria in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the  
audio request from the user is one of a voice request and a keypad entry response and  
includes one or more of a category of service providers, a service provider price,  
service provider availability, service provider specific expertise, service provider  
language and a service provider minimum quality rating.
18. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein  
~~prior to the instruction for receiving the voice request, the manner apparatus further~~  
comprises ~~instructions of:~~  
~~receiving a request from a user for connection to a voice portal service provider~~  
~~system via the audio transmission medium;~~  
~~establishing a connection between the user and the voice portal service provider~~  
~~system in order to provide the user with a live connection with a chosen~~  
~~service provider;~~  
providing the user with an audio list of ~~the~~a wide array of fields of service available  
from the audio portal service provider system; and  
providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each  
field of service within the audio list of fields of service, ~~such that wherein the~~  
~~user can enter an keypad entry of a field of service code on a keypad of the~~  
~~user is received via the audio transmission medium to select a desired field of~~  
~~service for the one or more search criteria;~~  
wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an  
option list.

19. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein following the instruction for connecting the user with the selected service provider, the apparatus-manner further comprises instructions of: once the live conversation between the user and the selected service provider is complete, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for services rendered by the service provider; and recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.

20. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein said determining a selection from the user further comprises: when the user audio request includes a voice request, converting the voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user; when the user audio request includes a keypad entry response, converting a DTMF signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query language format in order to determine the service provider selected by the user; and querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the service provider desired by the user to enable connection between the user and the desired service provider.

21. (Currently Amended) An audio portal service provider system comprises: an interface to an audio transmission medium to connect a user to the system; an audio recognition engine for receiving to receive one or more search criteria in an audio form an audio request from the user a user, via the audio transmission medium, for a service provider stored in a service provider database; and

a processor coupled to the audio recognition engine and the interface, the processor to search a service provider database according to the one or more search criteria to generate a list of one or more service providers for presentation to the user in an audio form, the processor to further determine receive a selection from of the user for a selected provider from the list of one or more service providers via the audio recognition engine, and the process to cause the interface to connect the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission medium.

22. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 21, further comprising wherein: a system the interface is coupled to the processor to provide the user with an audio list of available fields of service providers, accept a field of service desired by the user, provide the user with a list of one or more service providers stored in a service provider database which match the one or more search criteria and the field of service desired by the user, and a and receive a selection from the user for a selected provider.
23. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 21, further comprising: a provider network interface for coupled to the processor to receiving receive a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database, and the processor to generate a record for storage in the service provider database, the record including provider information contained in the request.

24. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein the provider information includes ~~one or more of a service price, real time service provider availability, specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more languages spoken by the service provider and a quality rating for the service provider.~~
25. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 21, wherein ~~audio transmission medium further the interface~~ comprises:  
a public switched telephone network interface ~~to connect a user to the system;~~  
wherein the processor searches the service provider database to generate the list of one or more service providers based at least partially on information indicating availability for service providers to conduct live conversation.
26. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 21, wherein ~~audio transmission medium further the interface~~ comprises:  
a wireless communications network interface ~~to connect a user to the system;~~  
wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an option list.